



#YourSayVA Digital Town Hall On Distracted Driving Response Assessment

The purpose of the online survey was to allow Virginians to share their thoughts on distracted driving and other unsafe driving behaviors with the Governor's Executive Leadership Team on Highway Safety. Respondents totalled 2084 persons during December 2018. The survey consisted of eleven questions, five of which were open ended allowing respondents to provide unstructured feedback. Respondents were self-selecting in response to media events, solicitation of safety partners, local media messages, news releases, and online posted information about the distracted driving Digital Town Hall. They do not represent a random sample of Virginia residents. Part 1 evaluates information received from the first six structured questions and Part 2 looks at the five open-ended questions.

PART 1: QUESTIONS 1 THROUGH 6

When asked to select the most serious risky behavior, 49.2% of respondents identified distracted driving, followed by 24.2% who identified drunk driving. 93.3% of all respondents indicated that distracted driving is a very serious or serious problem. When asked how often respondents used a phone while driving, 13.5% indicated frequent or moderate use. Only 21.7% stated they never use a phone while driving. 70.1% of respondents indicated that, as a passenger, they had asked a driver to put a phone away while driving. Table 1 summarizes this information while more detail is provided in the following sections. One thing to note is that over 50% of respondents ranked not wearing a seatbelt as the least serious behavior.

Table 1. Summary of Survey Responses

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Survey Question	Percent of Total Respondents									
Respondent Perceptions										
Ranking of Risky Behaviors*	Highest	2 nd		3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	Lowest		Trend
Distracted Driving	49.2%	17.1%		14.1%	9.3%	5.1%	2.7%	2.	6%	_
Drunk Driving	24.2%	24.5%		18.4%	14.7%	10.4%	4.6%	3.2%		-
Aggressive Driving	10.8%	19.3%		16.9%	17.8%	17.9%	11.4%	5.9%		~
Not Wearing a Seatbelt	5.9%	4.9%		5.3%	6.3%	8.7%	18.2%	50.6%		
Speeding	4.7%	9.6%		12.7%	9.7%	14.5%	28.3%	20	.5%	~
Drugged Driving	3.2%	18.9%		20.6%	20.5%	18.4%	13.6%	4.	8%	
Drowsy Driving	2.0%	5.8%		12.0%	21.7%	25.0%	21.3%	12	.3%	
Seriousness of Distracted	Very Serious			\rightarrow	→		→		Not Serious	
Driving	80.4%		13.3%		4.9%		0.8%		0.6%	
Respondent Reported Actions										
Phone Use Frequency as a	Never		←		+		←		Frequently	
Driver	21.7%			44.2%	20	.6%	5.7%		7.7%	
Asked Driver to Stop Using		Yes		No						
Phone as a Passenger	70.1%			29.9%						

^{*} Behaviors listed in order of being ranked as most serious

From the trends shown in the rankings of risky behaviors in table 1, distracted and drunk driving have consistently decreasing numbers of respondents who rank these behaviors lower indicating that these behaviors are critical in respondents' minds. Aggressive, drugged, and, to a lesser extent, drowsy driving are not ranked either high or low but are ranked consistently in the middle rankings indicating that although they are not considered top priority, they are consistently identified as a problem. Conversely, not wearing a seatbelt has a consistently increasing number of respondents who rank this behavior lower, with speeding having a similar trend but some variability in the perception of respondents. This indicates that these are generally not considered a priority when considering risky driving behaviors.





Demographics of Respondents (questions 1 and 2)

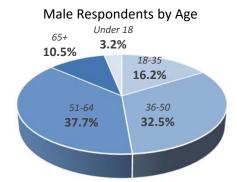
Respondents provided their age and gender but no additional personal information. As a result, no distinction could be made about geography associated with respondents' location of residence, driver's licensure, ethnicity or other demographics associated.

52.8% (1100) of the respondents were *male* and 47.2% (984) were *female*. Figure 1 shows the distribution by age group. The largest groups for both genders were respondents between the ages of 51 to 64 followed by respondents between the ages of 36 and 50. Women had a higher representation in age groups *Under 18, 18 to 35* and 51 to 64 while men had a higher representation in age groups 36 to 50 and over 65.

The percentages given in the remainder of this assessment are with respect to the total number of males and females respectively and with respect to each age group and not to the total number of respondents.

Ranking of Risky Behaviors (question 3)

Each respondent was asked to rank the seriousness of seven risky behaviors from 1 to 7 with 1 being the most serious. Table 1 provided a summary of overall rankings. Figures 2 and



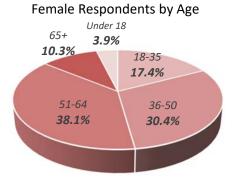


Figure 1. Age Distribution by Gender

3 show rankings by age and gender for what respondents considered the most serious (figure 2 and least serious (figure 3 problems. Individual graphs are ordered by highest to lowest number of respondents for each ranking. Percentages are with respect to the total number of respondents in each age and gender. Respondents could not duplicate a ranking, i.e. rank two behaviors as most serious.

Distracted driving was ranked the most serious by all genders and age groups except men and women under 18. For both of these groups, their highest concern was drunk driving. For respondents between the ages of 18 and 35, distracted and drunk driving were only 5 percentage points apart while for all adults age 36 and over, distracted driving was ranked 30 or more points higher than any other behavior. For 18 and under men, speeding tied with distracted driving while for 18 and under women, drugged driving was the behavior that was of most concern after alcohol and above distracted driving. The next behavior after distracted driving that was ranked highest by women age 65 and older was aggressive driving.

Driving while *not wearing seatbelts* (*unbelted* was uniformly ranked as the least serious problem across all ages for both men and women and by more than half the respondents for ages 36 and over. The next behavior that was ranked as least serious was *speeding* followed by *drowsy* driving. Less than 4% of respondents uniformly ranked distracted driving as the least serious with the single exception of women under 18.





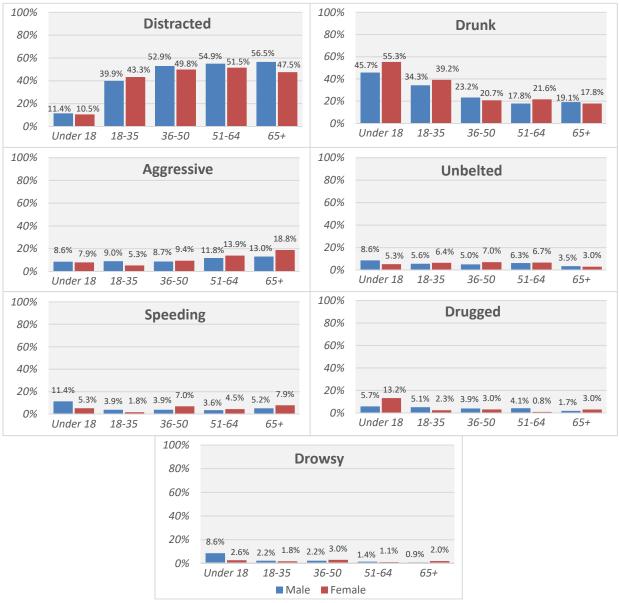


Figure 3. Respondent Ranked Most Serious Risky Behaviors by Age and Gender





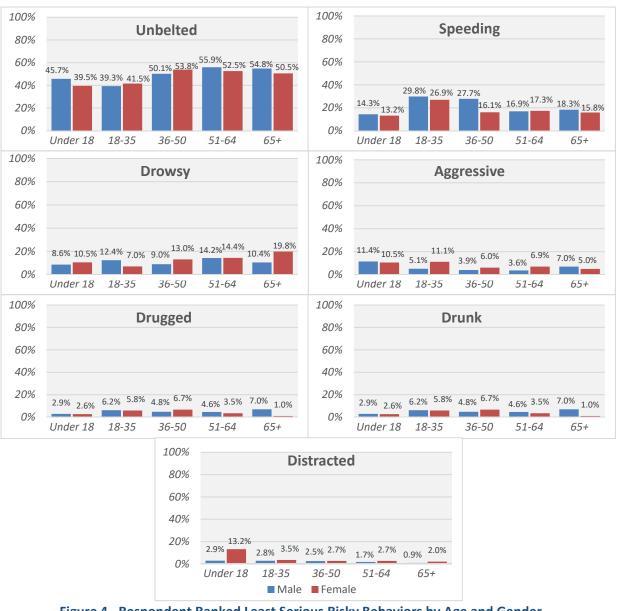


Figure 4. Respondent Ranked Least Serious Risky Behaviors by Age and Gender





Distracted Driving: How Serious a Problem is this Behavior (question 4)

82.6% of women and 78.5% of men indicated that distracted driving is a very serious problem, a 4.1% difference. This shifts somewhat when very serious and serious are combined. Then 95.2% of men and 92.4% of women indicate it is serious or very serious, a 2.8% difference. Although less than 2% of respondents indicated that distracted driving is not a serious problem, twice the number of men as women indicated this. Figure 5 details responses by gender of respondent.

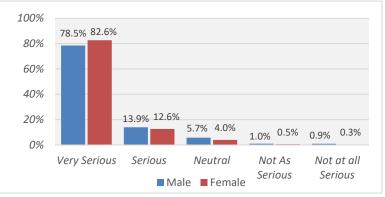


Figure 5. Seriousness of Distracted Driving by Gender of Respondent

In general, as their age increased, more respondents considered distracted driving to be a very serious problem. Worth noting, less than half of respondents under 18 selected the most serious option. Conversely, no one 35 and under considered it to be *not at all serious*, while 2.3% of respondents age 65 and older did. Figure 6 provides details by age group of respondent. This is expanded to consider both gender and age in Figure 7, which compares the percentage that each age group contributes to responses for that gender. Men in all age groups are more likely to consider distracted driving to be less serious than women except those 65 and older. This is particularly true for men under 18.

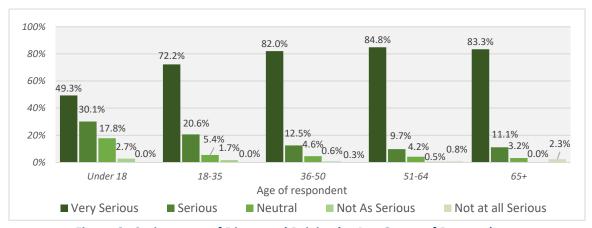


Figure 6. Seriousness of Distracted Driving by Age Group of Respondents

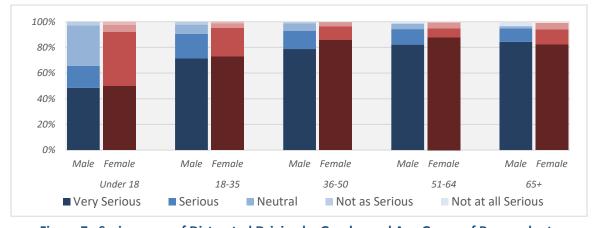


Figure 7. Seriousness of Distracted Driving by Gender and Age Group of Respondents





Frequency of Respondent Phone Use While Driving (question 5)

Care should be used when evaluating this question since no distinction was made between handheld vs hands-free use or the purpose of the use such as texting vs navigation.

25.1% of women and 18.6% of men indicated they never use a phone while driving, representing a 6.5% difference. At the other end, 9.1% of men and 6.2% of women indicated they frequently use a phone while driving, representing just over 3% difference. Figure 8 details responses by gender of respondent.

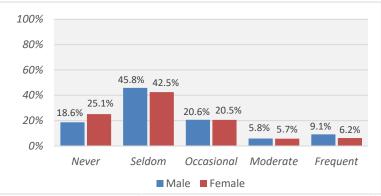


Figure 8. Frequency of Phone Use While Driving by Gender of Respondent

Somewhat in contrast to how serious a problem 18 and under respondents consider distracted driving, almost 80% indicate they never use a phone while driving. Respondents between ages 18 and 50 had similar usage patterns with nearly 18% of each indicating they use phones more frequently. This dropped to 10.5% for respondents age 51 to 64 and just under 8% for those 65 and older. Figure 9 provides details by age group of respondent. This is expanded to consider both gender and age in Figure 10, which compares the percentage that each age group contributes to responses for that gender. Figure 10 shows that, for ages 36 to 64, men are nearly twice as likely as women to frequently use a phone while driving.

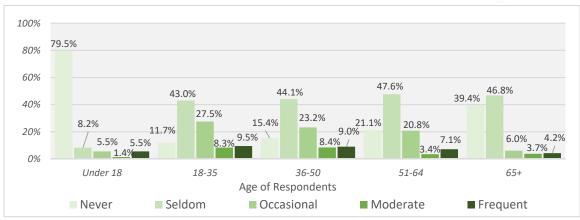


Figure 9. Frequency of Phone Use While Driving by Age Group of Respondent

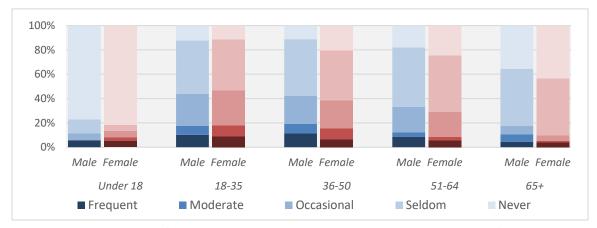


Figure 10. Frequency of Phone Use While Driving by Gender and Age Group of Respondent





Respondent Asked a Driver to Put Away a Phone (question 6)

The question about the respondent asking a driver to put away a phone may provide insight into how likely an individual is to take action to address another's behavior. 77.1% of females responded *yes* to this question, whereas only 63.8% of men responded *yes*, a 13.3% difference. Figure 11 summarizes responses by gender of respondent.

Respondents in all age groups were more likely to ask a driver to put away a phone than not, with those between the ages of 18 and 35 being most likely and those age 65 and over being least likely. Respondents under the age of 65 were generally more than twice as likely to ask. Figure 12 provides details by age group of respondent. This is expanded to consider both gender and age in Figure 13, which compares the percentage that each age group

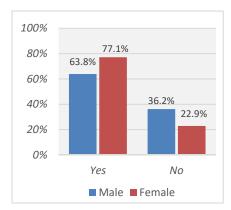


Figure 11. Respondent Asked Driver to Put Away Phone by Gender of Respondent

contributes to responses for that gender. For respondents under age 18, men and women were comparably split between yes and no, while for all other age groups, women were more likely to ask a driver to put away a phone. Of all age groups and genders, only men age 65 and older were more likely to not ask a driver to put away a phone.

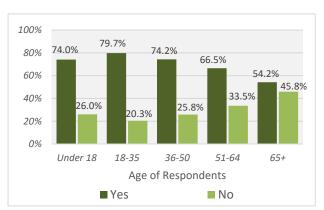


Figure 12. Respondent Asked Driver to Put Away
Phone by Age Group of Respondent

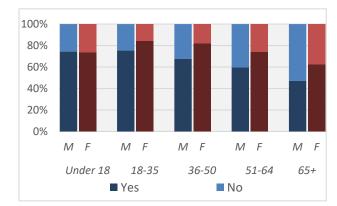


Figure 13. Respondent Asked Driver to Put Away Phone by Gender and Age Group of Respondent





PART 2: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS 7 THROUGH 12

Results from the last five survey questions are discussed separately because of their open-ended nature. Respondents could answer without restriction resulting in responses that were not usefully quantifiable through graphs or tables. Instead, this assessment uses the text mining technique referred to as a word or text cloud, which is a visual representation of the most frequently used keywords across responses. Except as noted, each cloud was limited to the top 20 words and, as practical, pointless words such as "to", "the", etc, were removed. It should be noted that the terms "distracted driving" and "phone use" were used without clear distinction and the questions should be carefully considered with respect to the term used.

From this assessment, three points stood out. First, respondents overwhelmingly considered family members to have the most influence on driver behavior. Second, "dangerous" was the most used word when respondents described distracted driving. Third, survey responses indicated that there is a belief that drivers are addicted to their phones.

Why do you think people interact (text, email, use apps) with phones while driving? (question 7)

The most commonly used words by respondents that were related to why people interact with phones were "phone" and "text". These terms were included in the question so are expected to have high usage. "Drive" was also commonly referenced but without a more in-depth assessment, no determination can be made as to whether it referenced a purpose such as *driving directions* or was part of responding to *while driving*. Other high-use terms included "addict/need/want", "time", and "feel" which provided insight into factors that influence phone use. These were followed by "import", "multitask" and "connect". Other informative words included "boredom", "instant", "respond", "miss", "wait", "habit", "communicate/call" and "business/work". Specific applications included "social", "media" and "traffic/road".

A common theme appeared to be a belief by respondents that drivers were addicted to phone use and felt impelled to interact with their phones while driving, and that time was critical to that interaction. A compounding factor that did not appear in the word cloud but was articulated in many responses was the influence of an auditory cue.

The structure of this question resulted in a wide range of responses from one-word answers such as "yes" and "ego" to detailed multi-sentence responses related both to general use and to respondents' personal use. Many responses included judgmental valuations instead of reasons for interactions. The wording of the question resulted in focusing the responses specifically to phone use instead of more broadly to distracted driving and did not distinguish between handheld and hands-free use.

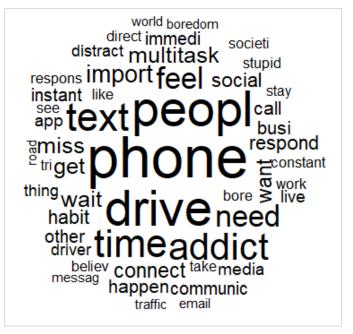


Figure 14. Why People Use Phones While Driving





If you talk on or use your phone in any way (either handheld or hands-free) while driving, what would influence you to stop? (question 8)

The most commonly used words by respondents that were related to influential factors to stop phone use were "driving" and "hands/handsfree/handheld". These terms were included in the question so were expected to have high usage. Other high-use terms included "law/illegal/enforcement" and "ticket/fine/penalty". These were followed by "accident/crash" and "emergency" and terms related to individuals, which is specifically addressed in question 9.

The most common theme was related to external influences, primarily through law enforcement and corresponding consequences. Another external influence that was mentioned was technological, such as disabling phones in vehicles. Self-guided influences included the potential for being involved in a crash and the safety of others. This includes a nuanced view of safety related to traffic or weather conditions. Of concern was the relatively large number of responses that stated or inferred that nothing was necessary.

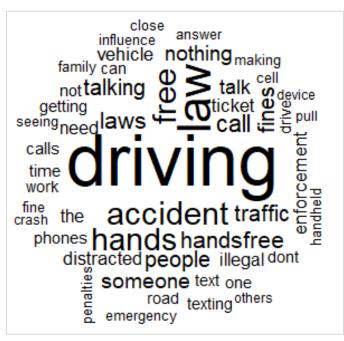


Figure 15. Influences to Stop Phone Use While Driving

As with the previous question, the structure of this question resulted in a wide range of responses from one-word answers such as "NA/no" and "spouse" to detailed multi-sentence responses related to influences on general use and to respondents' personal use. The wording of the question resulted in a non-binary response because it started with "if you talk on or use" but did not restrict responses to just those who use phones.





Who might be the most influential person in getting you to put away your phone before driving? (question 9)

The most commonly used words by respondents were related to family and included "family", "children/kids/child/son/daughter", "spouse/wife/husband/significant", "parents/mother/father" and "grandchildren/grandkids". Other high-use terms included "driver/self" and "passengers", followed by "anyone", "officer", "employer/boss" and "killed".

The single overwhelming theme is that respondents consider family members to have the greatest influence on their driving behavior related to phone use.

Although this question was open-ended, it was structured with a clear single objective which resulted in a clear indication of the responses.



Figure 15. Person Who Could Influence Stopping
Phone Use While Driving





What suggestions do you have to encourage people to proactively minimize/eliminate distractions while driving? (question 10)

Because suggestions typically consist of more than a single word, a different approach was applied to this question. This assessment considers sentiment in combination with key words using established dictionaries of positive and negative sentiments associated with survey responses. Figure 16 shows words with positive connotation in turquoise and those with negative connation in red. Figures 17 and 18 show each set of words individually.

Instead of looking at individual words, these figures are reviewed for the sentiment expressed by the words and their context with respect to other words with the same sentiment in the cloud.

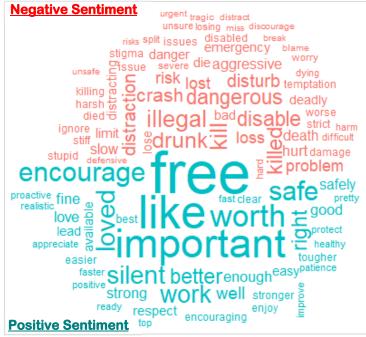


Figure 16. Suggestions for Encouraging People to Minimize/Eliminate Distractions While Driving

From figure 16, more words were

identified with a negative sentiment than a positive sentiment. The negative words were more evenly included in responses than positive words as indicated by the lack of variation in size of the negative words. The negative words tend to reflect the responses provided in question 11 on words to describe distracted driving. The emphasis on negative sentiment is an indication that respondents' suggestions were either framed in a negative form or that the suggestions themselves were negative.

"Free" is associated with hands-free and was the most common positive word. Its prevalence indicates a perception that hands-free use of phones has a positive inference related to distracted driving. Other



Figure 17. Positive Sentiment Suggestions



Figure 18. Negative Sentiment Suggestions





positive words provide insight into perceptions of how to encourage behavior change. That there are fewer words in the positive than the negative clouds indicates that respondents were more likely to provide pejorative suggestions.

The form of this question made it particularly difficult to evaluate since responses varied substantially. Suggestions covered the spectrum of affecting internal behavior to offering external dis-incentives or incentives, to use of technology, to enhancing education and advertisement to denying that anything will work.

What are three words you would use to describe the act of driving distracted? (question 11)

The most commonly used words by respondents to describe distracted driving were "dangerous", "selfish", "stupid", and "irresponsible" which were representative of almost all words in the cloud. Other high-use terms included "careless", "deadly", "reckless", "inconsiderate", and "dumb".

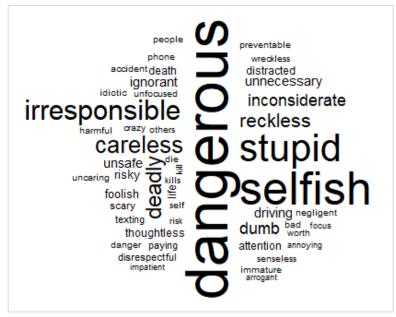


Figure 19. Three Words Used to Describe the Act of Driving Distracted

The single overwhelming theme is that respondents generally identified strong negative descriptors for the act of driving distracted. An interesting sub-trend was the use of three-word sentences such as "mixed up priorities" which were not captured in this assessment.

This question asked for three words but did not specify if these should be unique words, three-word phrases or three-word sentences. As a result, the form of the word cloud is a little different from other questions because of the potential for three keywords in all responses. That "dangerous" is twice the size of other words indicates the pervasiveness of this sentiment across respondents.